



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: FISH

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR FISH?

- It's *dag* (דג) or *dagah* (דגה) in the feminine form.
- The root meaning of the word is to multiply or increase.
- Has anyone ever had an aquarium with Guppys?—and, if so, what did they do?
- *Dag* refers to every kind of fish, from a Guppy to *dag gadol* or a great fish.

THERE IS A STORY IN THE TALMUD ABOUT FISH AND RABBI AKIVA, A MAN OF GREAT COURAGE WHO LIVED ABOUT TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

- The Roman Emperor Hadrian ordered that no one could teach Torah in public, so it was a crime to do what we're doing here tonight.
- When Rabbi Akiva continued teaching, the other rabbis told him he should stop because he was putting his life in danger.
- Rabbi Akiva then told them a parable, a simple story to teach them why he was risking his life.
- A fox saw fish swimming back and forth in a lake.
- The sly fox told the fish they should leave the water, where they might be caught in a fisherman's net, and come onto the dry land where they would be safe.
- We know, of course, what the fox had in mind for the fish.
- The fish answered the fox, saying: If we're unsafe in the water, which is where we belong, how much more unsafe we would be on dry land where we would quickly die.
- "The Torah is our life," Rabbi Akiva continued, "and we cannot survive without it." (Berachot 61b)

THE IDEA OF THAT FOX EATING THOSE FISH MAKES ME THINK OF ANOTHER QUESTION: ARE FISH KOSHER?

- Some are and some aren't.
- How do we know if a fish is kosher? (It has fins and scales—Leviticus 11:9 and Deuteronomy 14:9.)
- Now we know that to keep kosher we're not supposed to mix meat and dairy products.
- So which is a fish, meat or dairy? (Neither—they're *parve*, which means they can be eaten with either.)

IT'S TIME FOR THE FISH QUIZ!

- How can fish breathe under water? (They have gills, which are a kind of mechanical device for getting oxygen out of the water.)
- How can fish survive in water that's below 32 degrees, which is freezing? (They have chemicals in their blood that works like antifreeze in a car, which keeps them from freezing.)
- How many species of fish are currently living in the world? (About 25,000.)
- How many new species are discovered each year? (200 to 300)
- How small is the smallest fish and how large is the largest fish? (The smallest, a goby, is a little less than half an inch' the largest, whale sharks, are up to 40 feet.)
- How fast can the fastest fish swim? (About 70 miles per hour.)
- Incidentally, what was the name of the "whale" that swallowed Jonah, which we read about on Yom Kippur? (*Dag gadol*, which means "great fish.")

LONG AGO ONE OF OUR GREAT RABBIS (RAV YEHUDAH) ASKED:

- What is the meaning of the verse, "You [he was referring to God] have made humans like the fish of the sea" (Habakkuk 1:14). Why are humans compared to the fish of the sea?
- He answered his own question: To tell you that just as the fishes of the sea, as soon as they come on dry land, they die, so too humans, as soon as they abandon the Torah, they perish.
- What do you think he meant by that?



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